DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 261 EC 304 175

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TITLE Special Education Policies and Practices in the Pacific Rim Region.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (73rd, Indianapolis, IN, April 6-9, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; *Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Inclusive Schools; Regular and Special Education Relationship; *Special Education; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS China; Indonesia; Japan; Malaysia; New Zealand; *Pacific Rim; South Korea; Thailand; Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This paper examines both the emerging consensus among Pacific Rim countries, especially East and Southeast Asian countries, as to current and future directions of special education and the many differences among these countries in economics, cultural perspectives on disability, concepts of education, and administrative structures. The paper provides demographic data and a description of the status of special education for each of the following countries: Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, China, and Vietnam. Data are provided on population, percent of the population under 15 years old, number of students, per capita income, rate of special education placement, types of special education programs, educational policy, and future plans for special education provisions. Another section summarizes recommendations from recent international conferences and seminars including the World Conference on Education for All (1990); seminars held under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Seminar on Policy, Planning and Organization of Education for Children and Young People with Special Needs (1993). Recommendations from the UNESCO seminar are listed. A concluding section notes the gap between educational policies committed to inclusion and actual practices in schools and classrooms. (Contains 23 references.) (DB)

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Special Education Policies And Practices In The Pacific Rim Region

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Abstract

Despite an emerging consensus among Pacific Rim countries as to the future direction special education should be taking, there is wide diversity of practice, reflecting such factors as differences in economics, cultural perspectives on disability, concepts of education, and administrative structures. This paper will illustrate these points with particular reference to East and South East Asian countries.

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Invited address presented at Division of International Special Education and Services, Showcase Session, CEC Annual Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, 6-9 April 1995.

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I am honoured by your invitation to present a paper in the Showcase Session of the CEC Division of International Special Education and Services. In these times when of globalisation impacts on all aspects of our lives, it behoves us to have an international perspective on education in general and special education in particular. I congratulate the Division for the initiatives it has taken in this regard and for its intentions to further develop this important area.

I read somewhere that the purpose of comparative studies in education is not only to make the strange familiar, but also to make the familiar strange. I hope that my talk to you today helps you to achieve both of these goals.

In my presentation today, I will provide a selective overview of special education policies, provisions and plans in some countries in the Pacific Rim. I will focus on a range of countries, particularly in East and South East Asia: China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and my own country, New Zealand. I will also be very selective in identifying issues and trends.

For information on the Asian countries, I am relying on country reports presented at international seminars, mainly the Asia and the Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) seminars on Special Education, held annually in Japan, and the 1993 UNESCO Seminar held in Harbin, China. Other sources include the World Bank (Lynch, 1994). An expanded version of my paper will be published later this year (Mitchell and Chen, in press).

From the outset, I must emphasise that it has not been possible to verify all the statements made by the various countries in their official documents. However, I have visited most of the countries and have thus been able to bring to bear some judgement as to what information to include in this review.

Over the past decade or so, this region has been characterised by rapid economic and social change - particularly in the countries such as Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, China and Thailand. These changes have in turn given rise to educational reforms as countries seek to prepare their citizens for new economic and social orders.

The countries I will survey vary considerably in their development, with per capita incomes ranging from Japan ($US27,233 in 1991), to Vietnam ($200). The countries also include several whose economies are advancing at a rapid rate, with China, South Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand all enjoying GDP growth rates in excess of 7% per annum over the past few years. (Source: Far Eastern Economic Review, 1992).

Demographically, the countries I will discuss vary considerably, with China and Indonesia having the largest and fourth largest populations the world and my own country with a population of one of Beijing's suburbs. Also of significance in looking at education is the wide variation in the proportion of the various countries' population under the age of 15, with Japan having 15.7% in this age group and Vietnam 42.5%. Clearly, this variable has considerable impact on the availability of resources for education.

For the above and other reasons, the pattern of special education in the various countries is extremely diverse, ranging from negligible to comprehensive provisions, from highly segregative to partly integrative programmes, from coordinated to uncoordinated services, from untrained to well trained personnel and from poorly to well resourced provisions.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS

Japan

Population: 124.2 million, % aged under 15 years: 17.7%, primary students: 8.95 million, secondary students: 5.04 million; per capita income: $US27,233.

Japanese schools operate in a centralised, nationally controlled school system, and teachers throughout Japan must plan their instructional activities within the structure and guidelines prescribed by Monbusho, on the advice of a Curriculum Council.

Since 1979, education for disabled children has been compulsory in Japan (Misawa, 1994). According to the School Education Law, every prefecture must establish special schools for all disabled children. Special classes are provided, when needed, by municipal boards of education. In 1990, only 366 children were not in schools or were exempt because of their physical or mental handicapping conditions.

Approximately 1% of children in the compulsory school age are placed in special schools or special classes. This compares with 3.69% of all school age children being estimated as having special educational needs in 1967 (Ochiai, 1990).

There are five types of special schools for disabled children. Special school enrolments as of 1991 (Misawa, 1994) were as follows:

Type of School	No. of Schools	Enrolments
Blind	70	5,228
Deaf	107	8,149
Handicapped	783	78,157
TOTAL	947	91,534

Note: In 1990, 'Handicapped' schools included those for mentally retarded (482), physically disabled (188), and health impaired (99).

There are seven kinds of special classes attached to regular schools. In 1990, 41.3% of the primary schools and 46.3% of junior high schools had attached special classes. In 1991, the distribution of the more than 21,000 special classes across the different categories of disability were as follows (Misawa, 1994):

Type of Class	No. of Classes	Enrolments
Mentally retarded	14,630	52,440
Physically disabled	489	1,167
Health Impaired	536	1,789
Partially sighted	88	202
Hard of hearing	476	1,421
Language disordered	1,464	6,077
Emotionally disturbed	3,597	11,171
TOTAL	21,280	74,267

The Ministry of Education (Monbusho) has recently launched a pilot project to find better ways of serving students with learning difficulties. This has mainly taken the form of *tsukyu*, a type of pull-out resource room instruction (Narita, 1992). From 1993, the tsukyu system will be increased from 1600 teachers and will be fully in place in six years. To implement this programme, teachers in charge of tsukyu will be given in-service training and Monbusho will start modifying legislation in order to use flexible curriculum for children in tsukyu. As well, the National Institute of Special Education will research IEPs.

According to Misawa (1994), social attitudes towards persons with handicaps have improved markedly in recent years. He attributed this to various factors, including the various international campaigns on behalf of persons with disabilities, new laws, information from other countries, and Japan's strengthened economic power. Still, as noted by Narita (1992), the education system in Japan is suffering from a disease whose symptoms are entrance-score competition, school disaffection and drop out, and violence in the schools.

Future issues in Japanese special education include consideration of early intervention for children (other than those with hearing impairments, who are already served), transition education, tertiary study and lifelong education, liaison with health and social welfare organisations. Integration is also being developed and attention is being paid to providing professional support structures to enable class teachers to identify and understand handicapping conditions and to devise individualised education plans. In the face of declining enrolments in special schools, consideration is being given to redefining their roles as resource centres

New Zealand

Population: 3.4 million, % aged under 15 years: 23.1%, primary students: 0.42 million, secondary students: 0.23 million; per capita income: $US10,636.

The material summarised in this section is presented in full in Mitchell (1995). Since 1989, the administration of education in New Zealand has undergone dramatic and rapid change. These reforms are similar to those which have occurred, or are in process, in many other countries. In New Zealand, however, the reforms have gone further and faster than in most countries. For the most part, they were expressed in the Education Act (1989), and had earlier been outlined in the Picot Report (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988) and in the government document, Tomorrow's Schools (Lange, 1988).

The reforms were based on five fundamental principles of equity, quality, efficiency, effectiveness and economy. When applied to the education system, these principles resulted in the following:

- The learning institution (e.g., a school) is the basic 'building block' of educational administration, with control over its educational resources being used as it determines, within overall guidelines set by the Minister of Education. No intermediate bodies exist between the Ministry of Education and the individual learning institution; indeed, the reforms abolished 12 education boards that used to serve at that level.

- The learning institution is run as a partnership between the professionals and the particular community in which it is located. Boards of trustees, with governance responsibilities, are the mechanism for this partnership.

- The learning institution sets its own objectives, within the overall guidelines set by the Minister and within the context of a national curriculum. These objectives are intended to reflect the particular needs of the community in which the institution is located and are set out in its charter which acts as a contract between the institution and its community, and the institution and the Minister.

- The Ministry of Education provides policy advice to the Minister, administers property, and handles financial flows and operational activities.

- The Education Review Office carries out regular 'assurance audits' (to ensure conformity with statutory requirements) and 'effectiveness reviews' (to evaluate a learning institution's contributions to student achievement).

As far as special education is concerned, the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms dispersed responsibility among the above agencies, all under the general overview of the Minister of Education. Boards of trustees are required to include the following goal in their charters:

> To enhance learning by ensuring that the school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both sexes; for rural and urban students; for students from all religions, ethnic, cultural, social, family and class backgrounds and for all students, irrespective of their ability or disability. (Department of Education, 1989, p.10)

The Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring that this objective is appropriately addressed in schools' charters and the Education Review Office is responsible for seeing that schools meet the objective. The Special Education Service (SES) - a newly established, fully funded (currently) and independent agency - provides a free, non-contestable service to learning institutions and caregivers of students with difficulties in learning or development.

As well as the above requirement for school charters, there are several official statements relating to New Zealand schools' responsibilities towards students with special educational needs. Of particular importance is Section *8 of the Education Act 1989* which specifies that "people who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same right to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not." Under this section, all students between the ages of 5 - 19 years are entitled to a free enrolment and

education in any state school. The exceptions envisaged are when the Secretary of Education agrees with a student's parents that a student should be enrolled at a particular state school, special school, special class, special clinic or special service. The Secretary also retains the right to direct the person's parents to so enrol the person. In such circumstances, parents have the right to have such a direction reconsidered through a system of arbitration.

In a recent move, the New Zealand government set up a National Advisory Committee on Special Education. This Committee, of which I am a member, has the task of advising the Minister of Education on the promulgation of national policy for delivering special education resources. Its additional tasks are to develop a national strategic plan for special education to be implemented over the next 3-5 years

A range of provisions for students with special needs exists within primary, intermediate, secondary and area schools. The following summary of Ministry of Education (1992) statistics for 1 July 1991 represent the most recent figures available for the provisions outlined:

Residential special schools : In July 1991, there were eight residential special schools funded by the Ministry of Education: two for students with hearing impairments; three for students of primary school age who were behaviourally disturbing; two for students with difficulties in learning; and one for students with visual disabilities. The total number of students in these schools was 490.

Students with intellectual disabilities In July 1991, there were 29 day special schools providing for a total of 630 students with intellectual disabilities. However, the bulk of such students (1,192) were located in a total of 214 classes or units on regular school sites, while a further 400 were being educated in regular classes.

Students with physical disabilities. A total of 134 students with physical disabilities were enrolled as day pupils in two special schools, 297 were in 42 units attached to regular schools and another 251 were mainstreamed into regular classes.

Students with visual disabilities. Besides the 60 students in a residential special school, approximately 550 students with visual disabilities were attending regular schools supported by itinerant teachers attached to visual or sensory resource centres. A further 43 students attended units in regular schools, and 340 were served by itinerant staff from the single residential school.

Students with hearing disabilities. In July 1991, 199 students with hearing disabilities were enrolled as boarders in the two residential special schools or as day pupils in schools in the cities in which the two residential schools were located. A further 87 were being educated in units attached to regular schools and another 308 in regular classes supported by 32 itinerant teachers.

Students with educational and social difficulties The majority of the 3,941 students with educational and social difficulties less manifest than those outlined above were being served by 328 'resource teachers, special needs'. These students, who between them had a widely varied combination of educational and social difficulties and physical or sensory impairments, were in special classes or in regular classrooms with varying proportions of their time spent in either setting.

Other provisions. Special education services were also provided in institutions run by health authorities. Included here were seven health camp schools, two hospital schools and 26 hospital classes. In July 1991, 557 students were identified as receiving a service while resident in one of these facilities. Schools were also run in a small number of Department of Social Welfare institutions, although these are closing in line with that department's policy of maintaining children in their home communities. As well, the Correspondence School, based in Wellington, but with teachers also located in various parts of the country, provided distance education assistance for students with special needs who were unable to attend school for whatever reason. In 1991, the Correspondence School provided early intervention programmes for over 300 families with preschool children with special educational needs, full time

individual programmes for 250 school-age children, and individual assistance for over 1,000 children. In the latter group, the children had a dual enrolment with the Correspondence School and their local school.

In addition to the above range of special education provisions, the Ministry of Education, on the advice of the SES, allocates discretionary resources on a short term basis. These resources mostly take the form of teacher aide hours, part-time teacher hours, special transport provisions, boarding assistance, and equipment. Teacher aide hours are allocated to provide assistance to regular teachers to maintain children with special educational needs in a school and they are usually related to carrying out the objectives of individual educational plans (IEPs).

In a recent review commissioned by the Ministry of Education, a colleague and I (Mitchell and Ryba, 1994) recommended the adoption of a comprehensive, national framework for ascertaining students' education support needs arising from their physical, sensory, learning or behavioural attributes. We introduced the concept of five levels of education support needs, ranging from those which can normally be expected to be met by a regular school within its existing resources and under its statutory obligations, through to those which require alternative programmes with high levels of additional specialised resources. A 'Needs Ascertainment Agreement' was recommended to be used to identify these levels and to determine what education supports are required for individual students. For a more detailed summary of this review, see the paper presented earlier at this conference (Mitchell and Ryba, 1995).

Republic of Korea (South Korea)
Population: 43.6 million, % aged under 15 years: 24.8%, primary students: 4.5 million, secondary students: 4.4 million.

According to Kim (1993), it is estimated that 7.19% of the school-age population have special educational needs. Of this group, about 78% are considered to be mildly handicapped and the remaining 22% severely handicapped. A more conservative Ministry of Education estimate is that 1.26% of the population of school-age children require special education. However, only 40% of them are receiving such provisions (4.5% at kindergarten level, 58.6% at elementary, 17.5% at lower secondary and 11.4% at upper secondary).

To cater for children with special education needs, the Republic of Korea has a range of special education provisions. As of 1992, a total of 101 special schools served 21,000 students, comprising those who were mentally retarded (53 schools), deaf (21), blind (12), physically handicapped (13) and emotionally disturbed (2). Another 35 new special schools and 108 branch schools are planned for 1993-2001. In 1992, 70% of special schools were private. In addition, 3,248 classrooms served 29,000 students, mainly those who were mildly mentally retarded, partially sighted and hard of hearing. A further 3,350 special classes are planned for 1993-2001. In these special classrooms, students are withdrawn from time to time for individual or small group help.

Special education is administered by the Ministry of Education, through the Division of Compulsory Education of the Department of General Education. However, to increase the cooperation among the diverse institutions involved in special education, it is recognised that the administrative structures in the Ministry of Education need to be modernised. Recent moves have been made to establish a department with responsibility for special education within the Ministry of Education; also there are plans to establish consultant teachers with special education responsibilities in each district education office (Kim, 1993). Already some responsibilities for special education has been devolved, with labelling of handicapping conditions being controlled by the Diagnosis Committee for Services for Special Education which is organised in each school and in each provincial/municipal/county board of education.

To implement mainstreaming, it is recognised that it is necessary not only for special education teachers, but also for the public at large and the regular classroom teachers and administrators, to understand the needs and benefits of integration. Major problems associated with mainstreaming include developing ways of making it work in classes of 40 to 50 students and obtaining access to specialist assistance over and above that provided by the teacher.

Malaysia

Population: 18.6 million, % aged under 15 years: 37.0%, primary students: 2.45 million, secondary students: 1.37 million; per capita income: $US2,448.

As part of the government's vision of Malaysia becoming a developed country by 2020, with a strong, caring society, increased attention will be paid to those with special educational needs. Social justice is the pivotal organising principle and is embodied in the emphases on equal access to education and community life.

Although education is not compulsory in Malaysia, 98.8% of children participate in primary education. The school system calls for nine years of education and this is soon to be extended to 11 years. Pupils proceed to next higher class irrespective of performance.

Policy and legislation on persons with special educational needs is a shared responsibility of four Ministries - Education, Health Services, Social Welfare and Human Resources, and Youth and Sports. The Ministry of Education has responsibility for providing education for hearing impaired, visually handicapped and educable mentally handicapped; other ministries are responsible for other groups of handicapped. Early intervention involves collaboration among three Ministries - Education, Health Services, and Social Welfare. In 1991, a National Advisory Council on Children with Special Needs was set up with responsibility for advising on achieving the objectives of Vision 2020, as well as providing a further platform for collaboration among ministries and NGOs and to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of funds. Another issue at the policy level is the need to monitor the implementation of special education policies in an increasingly devolved education system.

Notwithstanding Malaysia's commitment to a non categorical approach, most special education provisions are still based on fairly traditional categories. Thus, in 1991 there were 641 visually impaired children in 24 schools, 3,106 hearing impaired children in 66 schools and 633 learning disabled children in 38 schools.

Special education provisions are on a continuum from regular class placement to residential special schools.

In 1993, Malaysia made a major commitment to inclusive education. It is anticipated that there will be a full implementation of inclusive schools by 1996. This will involve moves towards special schools functioning as resource centres involved in outreach programmes with staff supporting inclusive programmes. It is planned that only one quality system of education should exist, not a regular and a special education system. There is a concern that special education should not be allowed to develop into an isolated and parallel school system.

As a further expression of this philosophy, Malaysia has a national curriculum which is modified at the district or school level, where necessary, for students with special needs. The need for all pre-service and in-service teacher education to include units of work on special education and for increased parent involvement is also planned.

Malaysia intends moving away from a categorical, deficit orientation to the identification of learning problems according to students' functional skills in a range of skill areas.

Thailand

Population: 57.6 million, % aged under 15 years: 34%, primary students: 7.2 million, secondary students: 2.3 million; per capita income: $1,604.

In Thailand, the government has recognised that children with disabilities should be given equal educational opportunities and that the State should be responsible for the management of special education. Thus, the Seventh Education Development Plan (1992-94) provides for equal treatment for both special and regular education. All children between seven and 15 must complete six years of primary education and since 1990 there has been an expansion of access from six to nine years. Notwithstanding the intent to implement universal primary education, the Elementary Compulsory Education Act of 1980 allows for parents to request exemption

from attendance for any child with physical and/or intellectual disability.

In 1987, the Office of the National Primary Education Commission found that only 0.7% of disabled children completed primary education, while a UNICEF (1989) study found that 61.4% of these children had received no education. Even when NGOs are taken into account, only a small proportion of children with disabilities receive any education. For example, government and private schools together cater for less than 2% of mentally retarded children (Dheandanhoo, 1991). More recently the director of the Special Education Division estimated that only 10% of children with intellectual or physical disability were receiving education (Hanko, 1992).

Since 1952, the Ministry of Education, through its Special Education Division in the Department of General Education, has been responsible for organising special education in Thailand. A recent move to upgrade the Division to a full department was rejected by government on the grounds that the scope of work was too small. In 1986, the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) launched the Development Model of Special Education Project to meet the needs of mentally handicapped and hard of hearing children by integrating them into regular primary schools. Delinquent and emotionally disturbed children fall under the Ministry of Health and Justice. The Ministry of Interior, through its Public Welfare Department, takes care of destitute and abandoned disabled children in residential centres.

The division of responsibility between the Office of the National Primary Education Commission and the Special Education Division has led one writer (Klinmahorm, 1992) to observe that to most people in Thailand special education has become synonymous with the education of blind, deaf, mentally retarded and physically disabled children. This limited view has led to the creation of a small, more or less parallel school system with special schools and institutions, which have not been of significant concern to the rest of the education system.

The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act 1991 included several new categories of disability: learning disabilities, behaviour disorders, and emotional disturbances, language and speech impairments, and multiple handicaps. When this Act is fully implemented it will result in the addition of new teacher education courses to prepare teachers for each of these new categories.

As an indication of the extent to which the goal of integration is being met, in 1993, only 203 schools (out of 34,000) in 32 provinces (out of a total of 72) had integration programmes. According to Klinmahorm (1992), two factors inhibit the move towards inclusive education. Firstly, most officials within the Ministry of Education and most lecturers in education believe that only mildly disabled children can be integrated into mainstream education and that others with more severe disabilities should attend special schools. Secondly, the split of responsibility between the Division of Special Education and the Office of the National Primary Education Commission indicates a lack of coherence and even conflict, with the former promoting special schools and segregation and the latter integration. Another factor to be addressed in any attempt to move towards an inclusive education model is the impact of cultural beliefs regarding children with special needs. Hanko (1992) draws attention to the frequently held belief that the occurrence of a disabled child is the manifestation of the parents' own wrongful deeds, either in this life or in a previous incarnation. They therefore accept the situation and usually shelter disabled children, protecting them as much as possible. Because of ignorance, many people do not request an education for their children. They think that they cannot change the situation and must accept the fact that their child is handicapped. This point was reiterated by Klinmahorm (1992, p.2) who claimed that in Thailand, "little is expected of disabled children and therefore there is little need to provide facilities for them. There is a feeling of hopelessness - most people do not believe that disabled children can develop much." Further, as Hanko (1992) has noted, living by charity is a part of life in Thailand; the monks live from it and it is most acceptable that disabled people get help from able people. A related view is that whomever gives help to the disabled will get merit (rewarded) accordingly. These factors can make for difficulty in implementing rehabilitation in the community.

According to Klinmahorm (1992), a major difficulty in bringing about change in the education of children with special needs lies within the teacher education system itself. The colleges and

organisations that provide training still use the old concept of disability and this influences their pattern of training. The teaching methods are also very traditional and almost all training involves listening to lecturers. There is little attempt to develop a problem-solving approach which is essential in providing for children with special needs.

Indonesia

Population: 185 million, % aged under 15 years: 37.0%, primary students: 29.45 million, secondary students: 9.9 million; per capita income: $US638.

The administration of education in Indonesia is very complex, schools being established and controlled by several ministries. However, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) is responsible for the whole system of national education and all schools are required to conform to a nationally standardised curriculum. With regard to special education, this ministry, through a Sub-Directorate of Special Education, is responsible for planning, co-ordination, guidance and advice, and supervision and evaluation.

Although the participation rates for non-handicapped children in primary education is 99.6%, for handicapped children the figure is only about 7%. This disparity is a cause of concern and it may well widen when the government implements plans to increase the level of universal education at the junior secondary level in the near future.

In the area of special education, there are three models of schooling: 525 residential schools for different categories of handicap (23 public, 502 private), 209 special elementary schools which serve all categories of handicap within one school, and 85 integrated schools which provide education for handicapped and non-handicapped students in the same schools. There is a preference for educating mildly and moderately handicapped children in integrated schools rather than in residential schools, the latter being seen as more appropriate for profoundly and severely handicapped children. At present, integrated schools enrol only blind students, but it is intended to extend this provision to other types of handicap.

The following table presents 1992 data on special education enrolments for Indonesia, as noted in the country report to the 1992 APEID Seminar. A feature that stands out in this information is the important role played by the private, NGO sector in providing special education in Indonesia, with 502 out of the 819 schools being run by NGOs.

Type of School	No. of Schools	No. of Students
Public special school	232	9,991
Private special school	502	23,243
Integrated school	85	172
Total	819	33,306

China

Population: 1,158 million, % aged under 15 years: 27.2%, primary students: 122 million, secondary students: 51.05 million; per capta income: $US390.

On the basis of a 1987 survey, China estimated that there were 8.17 million handicapped children and adolescents (0-14), 6.25 million of whom were of school age. This latter figure represented 2.66% of the school-age population.

In 1986, the Compulsory Education Act in the People's Republic of China was promulgated. This Act marked the establishment of compulsory education in China, including the education of children with special needs. Since the introduction of Compulsory Education Act, the number of children enrolled in school has increased every year, the percentage of children in school in 1989 being 97%.

As can be seen in the following table, rapid developments in the provision of special education have taken place since the 1986 Act of Compulsory Education came into force.

Year	Special schools	Special classes	Enrolments
1985	375	0	40,000
1988	577	600	57,600
1992	1077	1,555	129,400

In February 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council proposed that by 1995 80% of children with special needs in big and medium-sized cities will receive education, the corresponding figures for economically well-developed provinces and moderately well-developed provinces being 60% and 30% respectively.

To achieve these goals and to take account of the fact that the majority of the population lives in rural areas, some of which are very isolated, China has decided that while special schools will continue to be established, forceful measures will be used to help most children with special needs attend regular schools. The growing emphasis on mainstreaming reflects three main factors. Firstly, since it is not possible to fund special schools, special class or mainstream class placement is seen as being more cost effective. Secondly, 80% of handicapped children live in rural areas and it is impossible for their families to send them to residential schools far from their homes. Thirdly, such an arrangement is seen as good for the interplay of special and regular education. As stated in the country report on China to the 1991 APEID Seminar on Special Education:

> To study together, participate in activities together, communicate with each other in the same class can make the handicapped children and the ordinary children understand each other, care for each other and help each other. This helps form a foundation for the handicapped children to join the society and survive in the society in the future.

Of children aged 7-15, only 1% received education from special schools, 54% of them were enrolled in regular schools, and 46% of them were either at home or in welfare institutions.

In China, three main obstacles to the development of special education have been identified. Firstly, Chinese people have conservative ideas about handicap. Secondly, non-academic study is generally neglected in schools and scores on academic tests are regarded as the sole criteria for evaluation. Ordinary teachers are worried that accepting handicapped pupils would interfere with study habits and achievements of the other pupils. Thirdly, there are inadequacies in educational facilities, teachers' abilities, support services, equipment, class size, and early intervention. In order to change negative attitudes, publications, films, and media are being developed to present a positive image of the handicapped and an annual national day for the disabled has been designated.

The administration of special education in China comprises a network of inter-departmental collaboration. The 1989 document, Policies for the Development of Special Education, section 15, states that the administration and management of special education should be managed under the leadership of government at different levels, but that the State Eduction Commission should take the major role. As well, the Civil Affairs Department, Health Department, Labour Department, Finance Department, the China Disabled Persons' Federation, the Labour Association and the Women's Federation are all concerned with the welfare of persons with disabilities.

A recent national study by the National Institute showed that provincial administrators were very concerned about teacher training to meet the needs of special education. They agreed that the traditional format of teacher training should be changed because of the large number of teachers needed for special education. The alternatives they developed included:

a) Opening up a number of teacher training institutions. By 1994 there were five universities (run by the State Education Commission) and 24 teachers training colleges (run by Provincial Education Commissions) providing special education courses.
b) Recruiting teachers from regular education and providing them with intensive training for special education before job placement.
c) Providing special education curriculum to regular teacher training colleges.

d) School districts implementing monthly or weekly workshops for teachers on special education.

e) Setting up various programmes for in-service training of teachers in regular schools to help them understand the significance of educating children with special needs.

Vietnam

Population: 70.8 million, % aged under 15 years: 42.5%, primary students: 11.9 million, secondary students: 0.55 million; per capita income: $US200.

In 1991, the Law on the Protection, Care and Education of Children and the Law on the Universalisation of Primary Education were promulgated. Together, these laws extended assistance to "special target groups", comprising handicapped children, orphans, street children, juvenile delinquents, and ethnic minorities in the mountain areas.

In 1992, there were 43 special schools for handicapped children serving more than 3,000 children, while integrated classes had been organised in 185 primary schools, serving 4,800 handicapped children. Save the Children Fund is working with the Centre for Research and Training of Handicapped Children in Ho Chi Minh City, with the aim of encouraging the integration of mildly disabled children into community schools and activities.

By the year 2000, it is planned that 90% of children in Vietnam will complete primary education, that no children will be illiterate and that 70% of handicapped children will be provided with primary education. It is also planned to strengthen and develop special schools. This will mean a progressive expansion of the number of children with special educational needs in schools to 50,000 by 1995, and 350,000 by 2000. However, delegates at the Harbin Seminar (UNESCO, 1993) noted that now that Vietnam has learned about inclusive schools it wishes to apply the ideas. In the past, it has concentrated on special schools, but it will now put inclusive schools and inclusive classrooms in each district. During 1993-95 there will be piloting of inclusive schools, and, by 2000, it is hoped that there will be a network of such schools so that each of the 500 districts will have one inclusive school and/or some inclusive classrooms. Teacher training will prepare teachers to become teachers of the handicapped mainly in the context of inclusive schools. Special education will continue to be administered by the Department of General Education and each province and district will have one or more persons with particular responsibility for special education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

During the last decade or so, several conferences and seminars relevant to special education have been held in the Region and have yielded a wide range of policy recommendations in the field of special education.

Chief among these was the World Conference on Education for All, which was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. This conference was convened by UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank and it brought together government representatives from 155 countries and over 150 NGOs. It adopted a World Declaration on Education for All, which included the following statements of relevance to children with special educational needs.

- Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.
- The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system.

A second source of recommendations regarding special education in the Region has been the regional seminars on special education, which have been held annually under the auspices of Asia Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID). These seminars have been hosted by the National Institute of Special Education in Yokosuka, Japan and have usually included representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan,

Philippines, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka.

A third, and major, source is the UNESCO Regional Seminar On Policy, Planning And Organisation Of Education For Children And Young People With Special Needs, which was held in Harbin, China, in 1993 (UNESCO, 1993). This seminar was organised as part of the implementation of policies arrived at by the World Conference on Education for All and it was aimed at country teams comprising their permanent secretary/ director-general, and heads of primary and special education. The seminar included delegates from 12 countries (Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam).

In the following, a selection of recommendations arising from the Harbin Seminar and from the 1991, 1992 and 1993 APEID Seminars is outlined:

A. Terminology

1. The term "children with special educational needs" is preferred. This term is becoming increasingly accepted internationally and is preferred over such terms as 'disability' and 'handicap'. Children with special educational needs will comprise different groups of children in different countries, but all children, including those with social and economic needs, should be supported within each country's education system (APEID, 1991).

B. Special Education Policies and Administration

2. Each country should pass laws to support the rights of children with special educational needs. In particular, compulsory education should be provided for all children with special educational needs, in keeping with the principle of education for all (APEID, 1991, 1993).

3. Special education should be seen as an important part of a country's total education system. However, there should be an identifiable administrative structure for special education within a country's education system. Special education should be administered by or on behalf of the Government Department responsible for administering education. This is very important given the growing emphasis on integration/mainstreaming (APEID, 1991).

4. There should be a coordinated delivery of special education, within an education system, including other Government ministries or departments and NGOs. Perhaps a human services committee of cabinet, which includes ministers from health, education and welfare could recommend coherent policy across government. Community-based rehabilitation programmes operating in some countries provide examples of what can be achieved when government ministries provide a coordinated service (APEID, 1991, 1992, 1993).

5 While the education of children with special educational needs is the responsibility of the Government, NGOs continue to play an important role in this field. Although they are not in a position to take on nation-wide responsibility, they can join forces with the national authorities, assisting in areas like community-based programmes and working on small scale innovative projects to demonstrate new approaches. In this respect, they act as catalysts for change. Thus, it is very important that NGOs be involved in planning and co-ordinating their work with the public sector provision (UNESCO, 1993; APEID, 1992).

6. It is important that the institutional capacity of schools to work with children with special educational needs be strengthened. One aspect of this should be to move schools away from providing an examination-centred education to a child-centred education. Other aspects will touch upon more favourable student-teacher ratios, provision of a flexible/adapted curriculum, and introducing new teaching/learning models such as peer tutoring and collaborative teaching (UNESCO, 1993).

C. Special Education Programmes

7. The education of learners with special educational needs should be a life-long process. This point draws attention to the importance of providing special education beyond the period of compulsory education into tertiary/higher education (APEID, 1991).

8. Early intervention for infants and young children with special educational needs in regular preschool or day care facilities is an important aspect in moving towards inclusive schools. (UNESCO, 1993; APEID, 1992).

9. Children with special educational needs should be educated in regular classes wherever possible. It is desirable that when integration occurs, countries should be encouraged to reduce the size of classes and to provide additional assistance for teachers (APEID, 1991, 1992).

10. One way of ensuring the success of inclusive schools is through the provision of special education support services which work in partnership with regular class teachers and parents to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to children with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1993).

11. Children with special educational needs should have individualised education programmes. This point refers to the need for teaching programs to take account of a child's specific learning needs. It does not necessarily require one-to-one teaching (APEID, 1991).

D. Resources

12. There is a need to develop sound fiscal as well as humanitarian arguments to persuade administrators and legislators to provide appropriate resources for inclusive schools. Without the application of the principle of the inclusive school, the cost of enrolling *all* children in basic and primary education would be prohibitively expensive if provided in separate facilities. (UNESCO, 1993).

E. Research

13. Sound data should be collected on children with special educational needs as the basis for planning service delivery and the evaluation of programmes (APEID, 1991).

14. Procedures for evaluating/assessing programmes for children with special educational needs should be developed and implemented. Programme evaluation is in keeping with the trend towards greater accountability within education and is a means of assisting staff to improve the quality of their services (APEID, 1991).

F. Training and Awareness

15. Teacher education stands out as a key factor in bringing about change towards inclusive schools. With our new conceptualisation of the learning difficulties of children, consequently teacher education programmes need to re-think and revise existing models and course contents. This applies to both regular and special education programmes (APEID, 1992; UNESCO, 1993).

16. Introductory and advanced special education teacher training courses should be developed and/or extended. One of the keys to improving the quality of education for children with special educational needs is the quality of special educators (APEID, 1991).

17. In order to move forward with the concept of inclusive schools, priority should be given to the training of school principals, head teachers, supervisors, and administrators to assist schools to provide the necessary support (UNESCO, 1993).

18. Programmes of parent education should be seen as important components of special education (APEID, 1991).

19. Awareness of, and attitudinal change towards, children with special educational needs require special attention. Although it should be recognised that some communities already

have high levels of understanding in this regard, communities need to be educated and informed on new approaches to address the needs of disabled persons, particularly as regards education provision in the mainstream, thus avoiding the problems of discrimination. Increased contact with children with special educational needs often increases understanding and acceptance. Schools might need assistance in accepting and in facilitating interaction with children with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1993; APEID, 1993).

G. International Co-operation

20. International co-operation can play a very important role in supporting the move towards inclusive schools. UNESCO is strategically placed to support and act as a catalyst in this regard.

21. Networks for information exchange and dissemination should be developed within and between countries. (APEID, 1991, 1992, 1993).

CONCLUSION

This paper brings together information on special education provisions, policies and goals in a range of Pacific Rim countries, mainly in East and South East Asia. In interpreting this information, it is important to recognise this region is very diverse with respect to the countries' economies, education systems and provisions for students with special educational needs.

One of the most striking points that emerges from a reading of the available literature on special education and from observations in several of the countries is the presence of significant gaps between aspirations, policy and practice. These gaps are particularly noticeable in the area of inclusive education where, despite enlightened policies and, in some cases, appropriate legislation, what goes on in schools and classrooms can be quite a long way from what would be considered to be inclusive education in many western countries.

It is clear that while most countries are moving towards accepting the philosophy of inclusive education, there are major obstacles to its implementation. For inclusive education to advance in many, if not all of the countries reviewed, it seems to me that several paradigm shifts will have to occur. Among the most important of these shifts, three stand out.

Firstly, there has to be a reconceptualisation of disability. The predominant view of disability in most of the countries reviewed is that it is something which exists within an individual. In this model, student failure at school is typically blamed on some defect or inadequacy within the child. In international literature, this approach is becoming more and more discredited because it ignores the role of educational systems in creating school failure. The alternative - and preferred - view is that disability reflects a mismatch between individual abilities and environmental opportunities. In other words, disability must be seen in terms of the interactions between individuals and the environments in which they live and learn. Associated with this reconceptualisation is the need to shift from disability-focussed categories to descriptions of learners' education support needs (Mitchell and Ryba, 1994) and the importance of changing societal attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Secondly, for inclusive education to come about, there has to be a shift in approaches to teaching. This has several dimensions - moves from prescriptive teaching to interactive teaching; from information transmission approaches to constructivist approaches to teaching; from undifferentiated, whole class teaching to a mix of whole class and small group teaching; and from an emphasis on competition to a balance between competition and cooperation.

Thirdly, the role of assessment has to change. Assessment is not simply a tool for sorting or selecting which learners should have opportunities to continue their education or which occupations should be open to them. Nor is assessment primarily a means of ranking learners by imposing a set of norms over them When assessment is used for selection or ranking it is inevitable that learners with special educational needs will fare the worst. In this sense, assessment procedures have often had the effect of excluding, rather than including, learners with special educational needs. They have certainly had the effect of stigmatising such learners

as 'failures' and demotivating them. Assessment is now seen in much broader terms than testing for selection purposes. Rather, assessment is increasingly being seen as serving educational purposes by promoting learning and guiding teaching. Assessment should provide the best possible account of what a learner knows, can do or has experienced. A related point is the need for education systems to become less dominated by examinations and more concerned with the holistic needs of learners.

For these paradigm shifts to occur and to allow for the development of truly inclusive education, countries should give consideration to the means for bringing about change. I believe that this would involve giving priority to the following: developing clear and internally consistent national policies on inclusive education, integrating the administration of special education with general education, establishing support services to provide advice and guidance to schools, providing appropriate professional development for teachers, ensuring that pre-service teacher education includes significant study of learners with special educational needs, and carrying out carefully designed and monitored pilot studies of inclusive education.

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